

August 15, 2019 General Updates:

At least some of you are old enough to remember telephone party lines. For the younger generation there was a time when several families with telephones were on a "party line" meaning that any conversation you had could be heard by anyone with a telephone on the same line. Often, people would pick up the phone to make a call and hear another conversation already underway. The proper courtesy was to hang up and not eavesdrop that did not always happen.

Sometimes I think of the popularity of Facebook in much the same way. Someone may read something and pass on bits and pieces without all the information or background often missing key facts.

Last week there were a number of reports that the St. Marys Pool (not the Aquatic Center Pool) was closed for unknown reasons and may never re-open. True, it did close when students returned to school because attendance always drops sharply at that time and work on the pool is needed. The pool will not re-open for evenings and weekends because repairs and routine maintenance have been scheduled. However, regular pass holders can continue to use the PSA Recreation Center Pool in Kingsland at no charge through Labor Day. Plans are in place for PSA SPLOST funds recently approved by voters to include \$150,000 to replace the aging restrooms and concession stand at the St. Marys pool so there is no plan to permanently close the Center; just necessary and routine pump maintenance and then major construction improvements to be ready for next year.

The City is continuing to work alongside Charlie Hester and his crews to ensure a timely completion of the SHRIMP project. City Staff, engineers, and Mr. Hester will be meeting next week to discuss project and any potential adjustments that need to be made to the current timeline. The City will be working with Mr. Hester to reach a solution and will follow up with citizens and interested parties next week with an update.

The North Side of St. Marys Street sidewalk is complete, and parking spaces are officially open. Crews will begin milling the South side of the street and install permeable parking on that side as well. The Bioretention basins are nearing completion, and City staff will be meeting with the landscape architects to make final decisions. The installations of these basins will complete the transformation of the North side of St. Marys Street.

The downtown boat ramp and docks are on track for completion in late September. The City looks forward to bringing back a key component in our marine recreational boating facilities.

There is more good news for boaters. The DNR new dock extension at Meeting Street now provides significant additional docking space to that popular boat ramp. DNR owns and maintains that ramp although it is physically located within the St. Marys city limits. Yes, it remains a public access dock regardless of whether the city or DNR owns it.

More good news related to downtown revitalization is that the new owners of the Riverview Hotel closed on that property Monday and are excited about their plans for the future. City staff have worked closely with the new owners and will continue to do so as we all eagerly anticipate what will be a major contribution for downtown rejuvenation and tourist appeal.

Several months ago some of the city's privately owned gas station/mini marts were closed. Fortunately, four of those have re-opened under new management with a fifth one on Haddock Road at Exit 1 expected to re-open very soon. We welcome our new business neighbors.

The county-wide Board of Elections & Registration is holding public hearings today at 11 a.m. (County Commissioner Chambers) and 6 p.m. County Annex next to county library) to detail proposed new polling stations for St. Marys and Kingsland voters. The changes for St. Marys voters are significant and I encourage St. Marys voters to attend one of these sessions and offer your comments and concerns about the new locations. Once the decisions are made, it will be too late to influence the decision with November elections right around the corner.